VISIT…

LANZAROTE Caliente.COM

The Slap Bass Program

with Alexis Sklarevski

Produced by David Schaub

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INTRODUCTION

The slap style of bass playing has become increasingly prevalent in the past few years, adding its rhythmic potency to everything from rock to new age. It is continually evolving and the techniques that it incorporates are becoming much more complex. This program has been put together to thoroughly explore these techniques and hopefully clear up some of the mystery that envelopes this provocative style. The tape presents a systematic approach that will help you incorporate the techniques in your own playing style and give you a feel for how it can work in a number of musical situations.

Like any other style, there are certain techniques that produce the "sound." Once we define some of the basic building blocks, then we can elaborate, one step at a time, to achieve some very captivating bass parts.

Keep an open mind and experiment with the material presented here. The tape contains a lot of variations that should give you a feel for the possibilities. The transcriptions will help clarify the underlying structure of the bass lines, however it should be mentioned that the overall sensation of a groove is sometimes difficult to capture on a written sheet of music. The notation is meant only as a guide. The slap style contains many subtleties that can only be learned by listening carefully and watching the moves. Once you see how it's done, you're a long way towards being able to do it yourself. Imitation is by far the best way to learn this technique.

USING A METRONOME

A metronome or drum machine is probably the most important tool you can use in your musical development. Since the slap style leans heavily on rhythmic content, it's important that you develop a strong sense of rhythm right from the start.

On the first few pages you'll find that our metronome clicks on each quarter note. In order to play the lines more accurately you could try setting your metronome to click on the eighth notes instead. This breaks the rhythm parts into smaller increments which should make some of the exercises easier to interpret and execute. Once you feel comfortable with the rhythm, try setting the metronome to click on beats 2 and 4 only. This will help you develop a feel for playing against the back-beat which is especially important in funk music.

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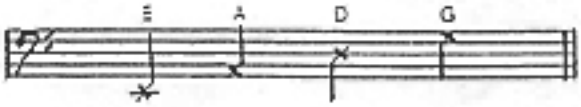
RIGHT HAND TECHNIQUE

This tape starts off with some exercises to develop your right hand slap and pop technique. In order to concentrate exclusively on this, we will be playing "dead notes." This is accomplished by muting the strings of the bass with your left hand.

The four muted strings used throughout this book are notated as follows:

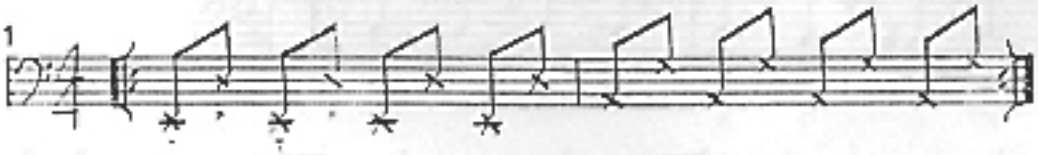


T = Thumb
P = Pluck

The fundamental right hand pattern is shown in example #1. Each time your thumb comes down to play a note, your fingers should touch the bass in preparation to pop a note on the upbeat (whether you actually intend to pop the string or not). Go over this section of the tape as many times as you need until you can imitate the motion comfortably.

The remaining exercises should familiarize you with some common sixteenth-note rhythms using this technique. The right hand motion is exactly as demonstrated in example #1, only the motion is now twice as fast. Practice improvising your own rhythm parts. Work with slow tempos at first, then try faster metronome settings when you feel comfortable.

Ex. 1



Ex. 2

Ex. 3

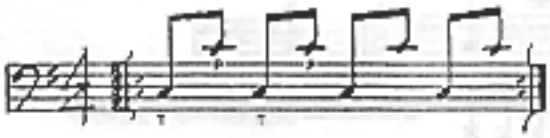
Ex. 4

OCTAVE EXERCISES

The octave pattern is one of the most commonly used figures in the slap style. It is also the cornerstone on which many of the more advanced techniques have been developed. Although the following patterns may appear extremely simple, remember that the purpose of the exercise is to develop a strong "slap and pop" sound. The lines should be practiced to develop endurance, consistency and control. Don't overlook the importance of this section!

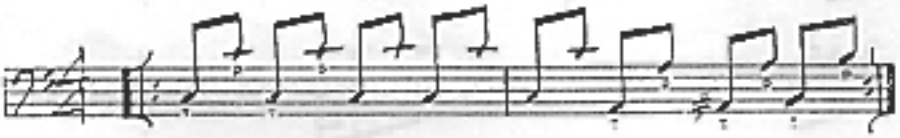
A controlled damping technique is used to alter the duration of the fretted notes to provide rhythmic emphasis and clarity:

Ex. 1 *Long Tones*

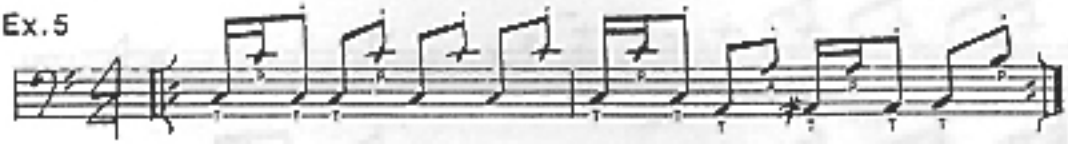


Ex. 2 *Short Tones*

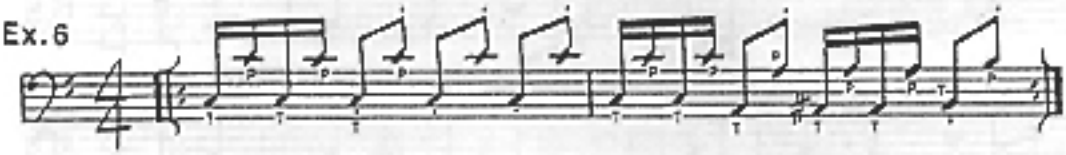
Pattern for
Ex. 3 *and* **4**



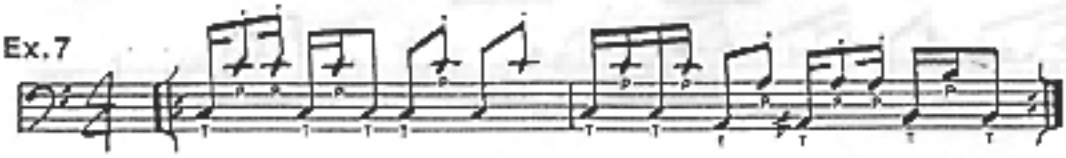
Ex. 5



Ex. 6



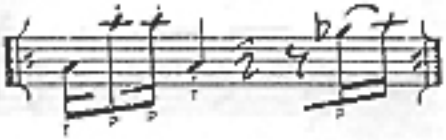
Ex. 7



Examples 8 and 9 can be joined together to form a two bar phrase. Notice how the use of space actually enhances the feel of the pattern while reducing the number of notes per bar.

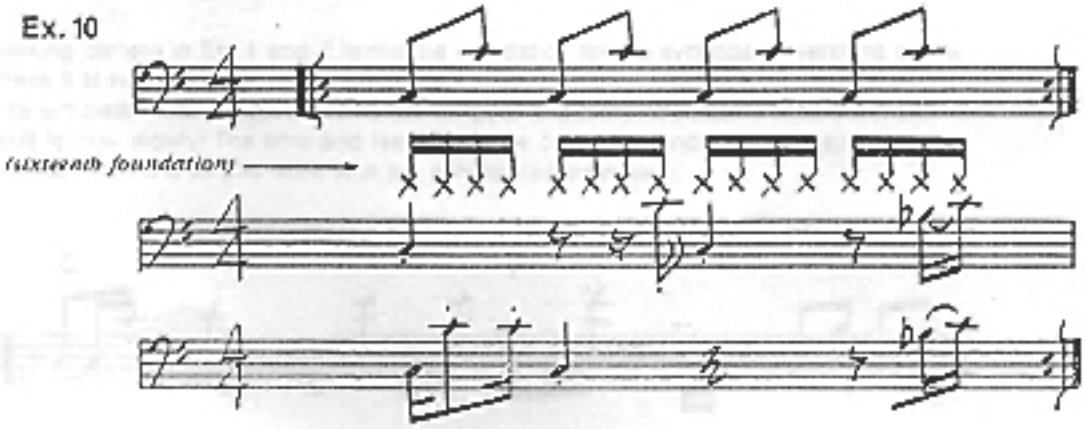
Ex. 8

Ex. 9

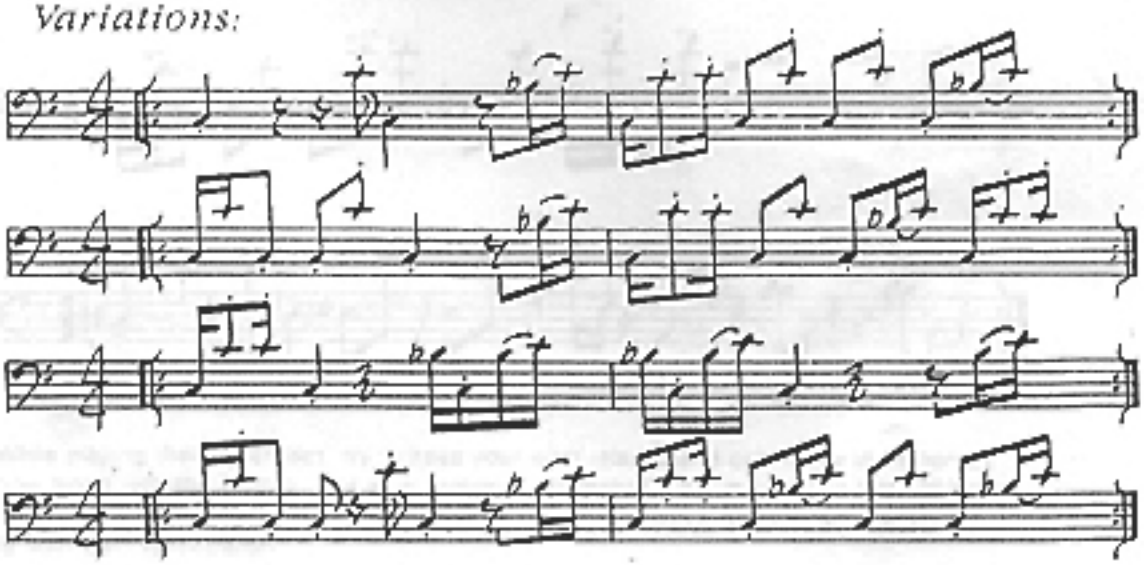


The next example illustrates the relationship between a rhythmically complex line and the simple eighth-note octave pattern. The octave pattern sets up the foundation (or reference), and the syncopation is built around that. You should be constantly aware of this relationship and always look for common rhythmic denominators in any style of music or bass line. The sixteenth-note "high-hat" line has also been included to clearly indicate where the syncopation falls.

Ex. 10



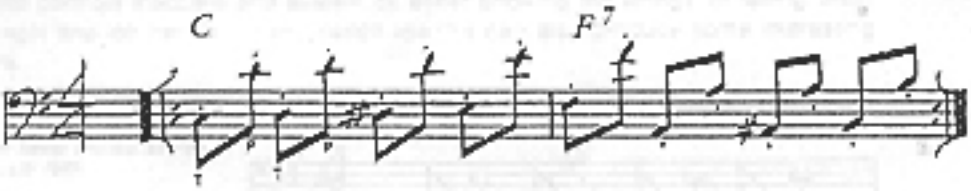
Variations:



FUNK VAMP

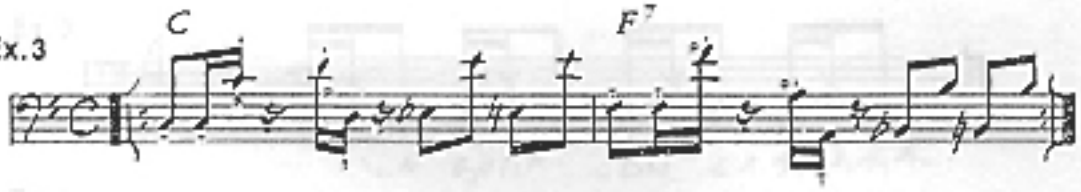
Ex. 1
(Long Tones)

Ex. 2
(Short Tones)

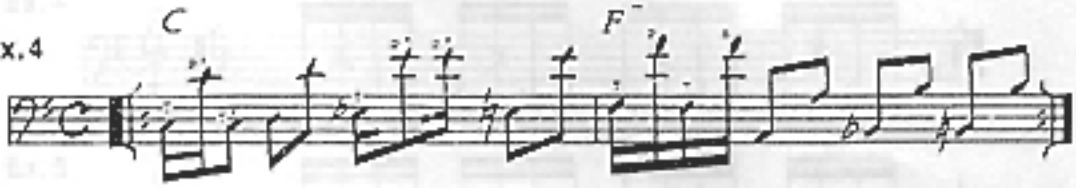


The walking pattern in Ex. 1 and 2 forms the foundation for the syncopated versions below. Practice these first two exercises until you project confidence and comfort in playing this vamp pattern in its simplest form. Try several different tempos, and remember, some lines are much more difficult to play slowly! The time and feel should be consistent and clean. Be sure to keep this basic pattern in mind as you work with the syncopated examples:

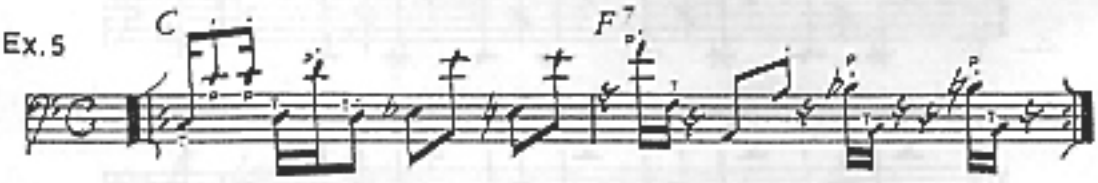
Ex. 3



Ex. 4



Ex. 5

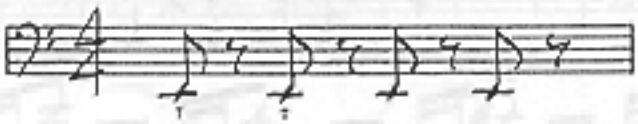


While playing these exercises, try to keep your wrist relaxed and continually in motion as you flow along with the rhythm. This wrist motion is somewhat like a metronome that will help you lock into the groove, and hopefully inspire you to pluck random notes within the bar to create your own syncopation.

OPEN STRINGS and DAMPING TECHNIQUES

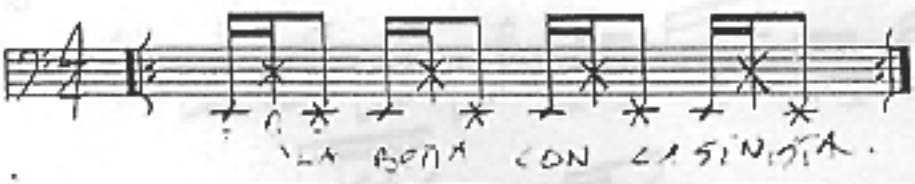
Earlier in the tape we worked with left-hand muting techniques and demonstrated how this is used to control the sound of the fretted notes. A similar technique is used when working with open strings. The basic concept is that the right hand sets up the rhythm and syncopation, while the left hand controls staccato and sustain by either choking the strings, or letting them ring. Using the right and left hands in conjunction like this can also produce some interesting rhythmic patterns.

Ex. 1 *Left hand mutes string to create rest.*

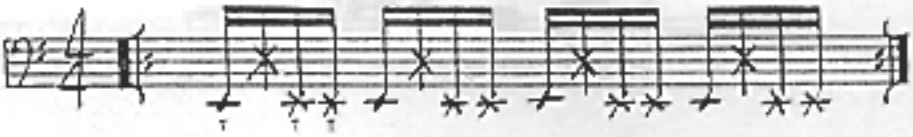


Ex. 2 *Left hand slaps string to create percussive effect.*

Ex. 3



Ex. 4 *



Ex. 5

Ex. 6

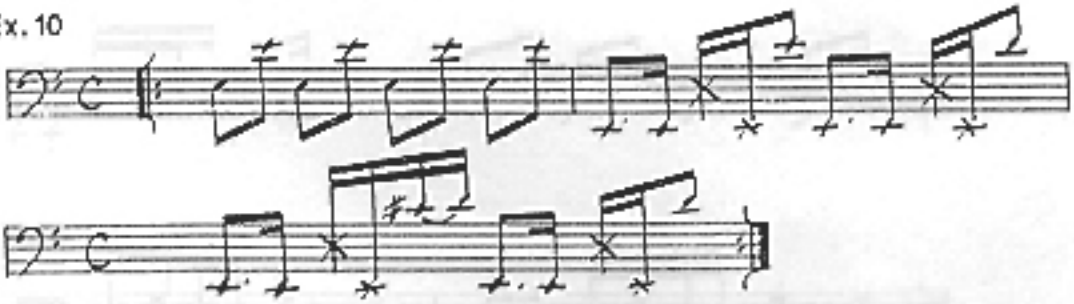
* Ex. 4 is demonstrated in the first four bars of the example that combines each of these patterns.

Ex. 7

Ex. 8

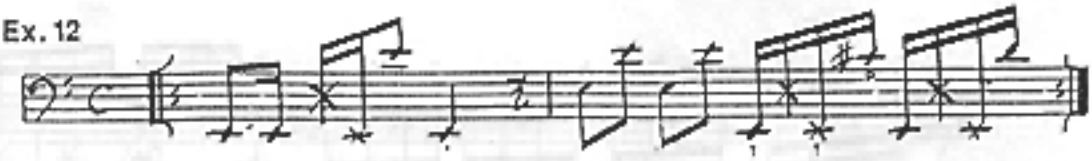
Ex. 9

Ex. 10



Ex. 11

Ex. 12



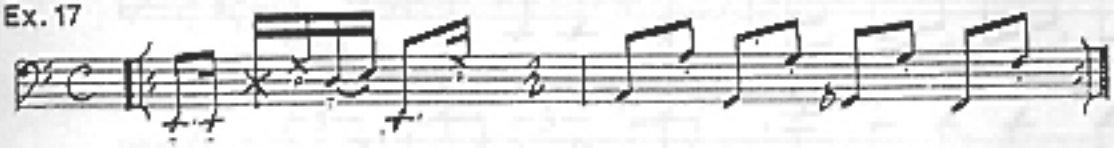
Ex. 13

Ex. 14

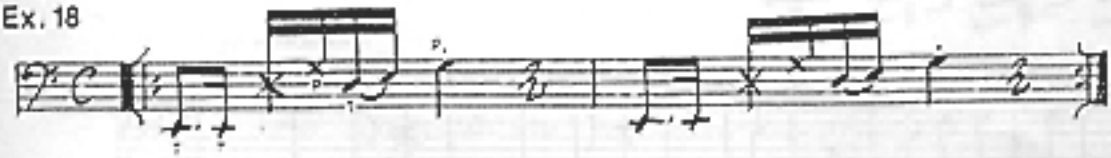
Ex. 15

Ex. 16

Ex. 17



Ex. 18



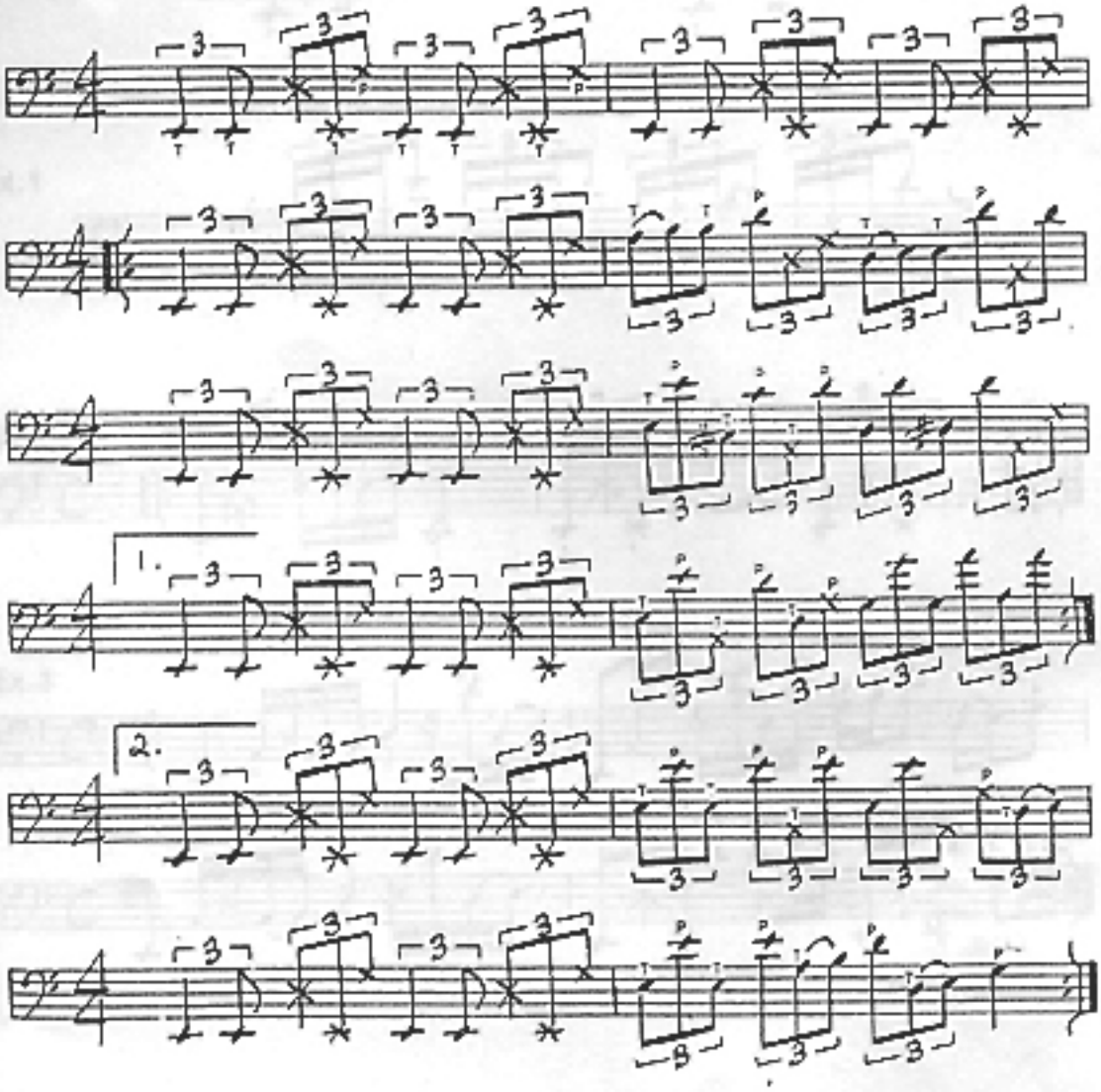
Ex. 19

Ex. 20

ADAPTING TO DIFFERENT RHYTHMIC FEELS

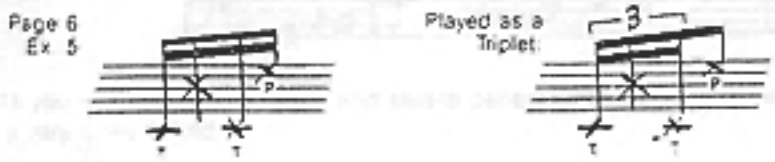
An entirely new musical flavor can be achieved by simply changing the *rhythmic* feel of a bass line, while keeping the notes essentially the same. This is demonstrated in the next example where the lines are played with a shuffle feel.

Line 1 shows the basic shuffle pattern which you should find very useful. The fills have been adapted from the examples on pages 7 and 8. Although this is an accurate transcription of what was played on the tape, remember that it isn't necessary to memorize the parts exactly as written. Listen carefully to the track and spend some time working with the basic shuffle pattern. Once you're comfortable with the feel of the groove it should be easy to create some fills of your own.



MACHINE-GUN TRIPLETS

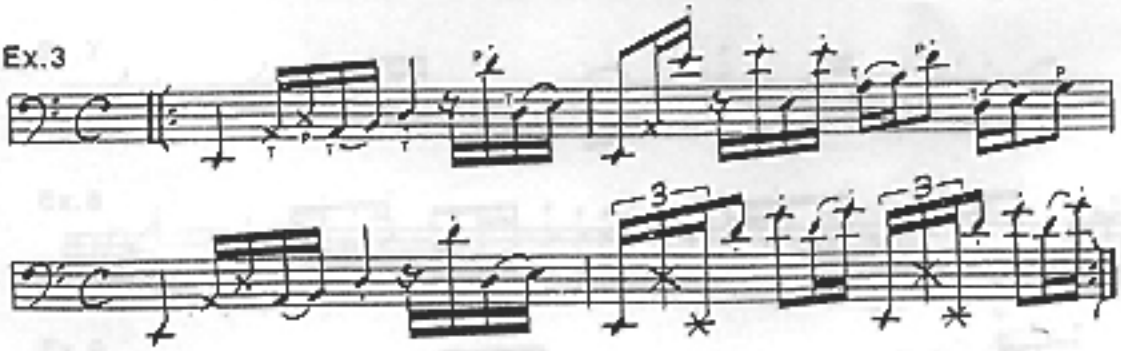
Another interesting rhythmical twist can be adapted from the examples on page 6



Ex.1

Ex.2

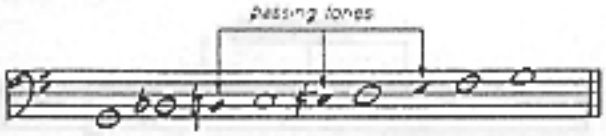
Ex.3



BLUES SCALE

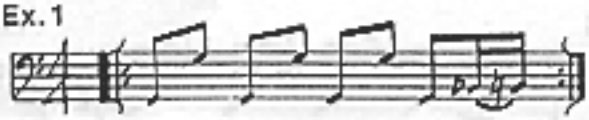
The blues scale is the most commonly used scale in the funk style. You should become familiar with this scale in as many keys as possible and in different positions up and down the neck. Notice that there are several passing tones which can be used to smoothly link the five notes of the scale.

Blues scale in G

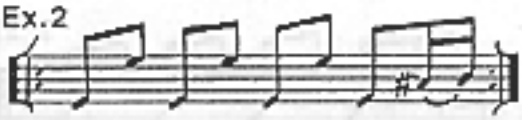


As you work with this, you will find several patterns that lay very well on the bass that also lend a very funky sound.

Ex. 1



Ex. 2



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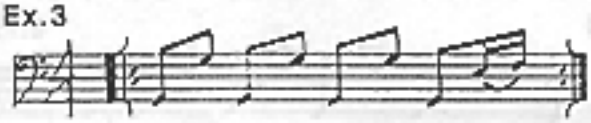

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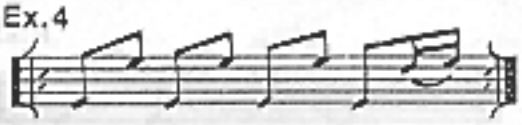

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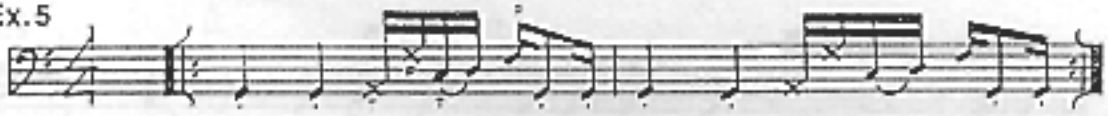
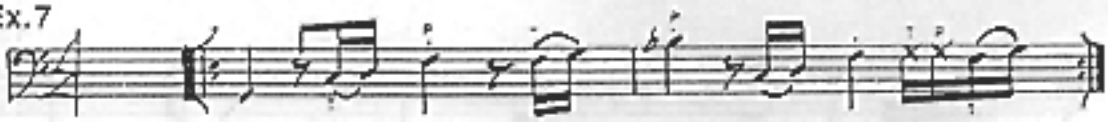


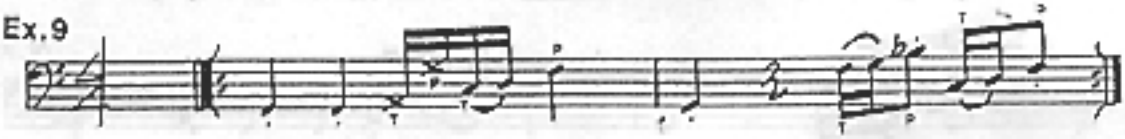
Ex. 6

Ex. 7



Ex. 8

Ex. 9



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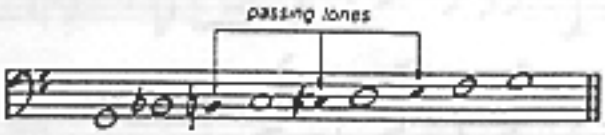

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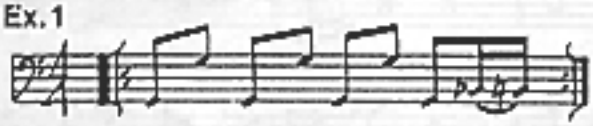
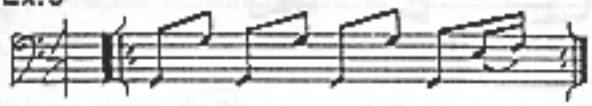
Ex. 1

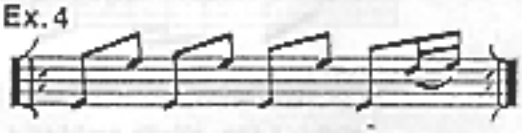


Ex. 2

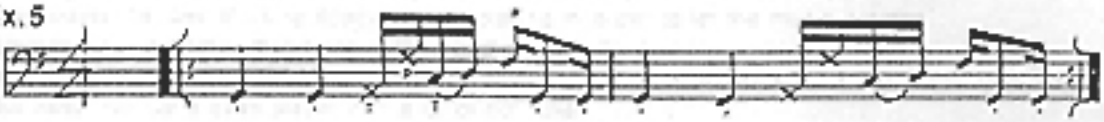
Ex. 3



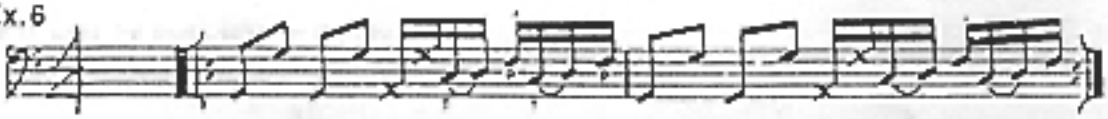
Ex. 4



Ex. 5

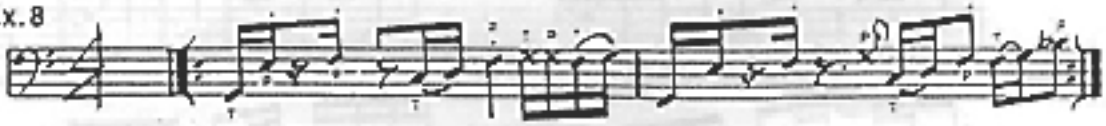


Ex. 6

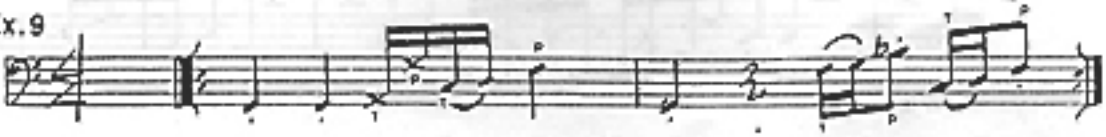


Ex. 7

Ex. 8

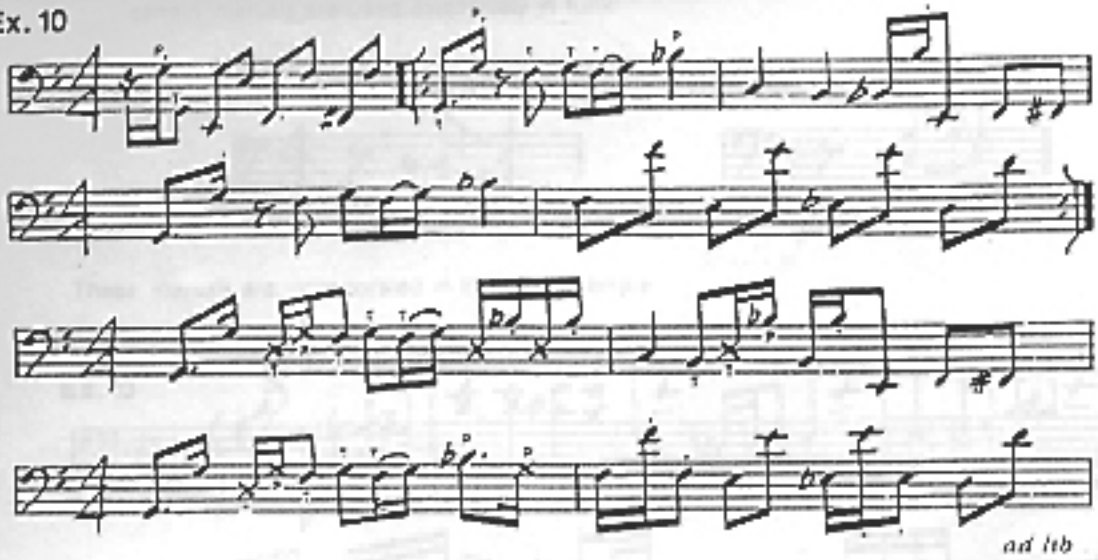


Ex. 9



Example 10 starts with a simple theme in the key of G, then develops into an improvised solo built around the blues scale

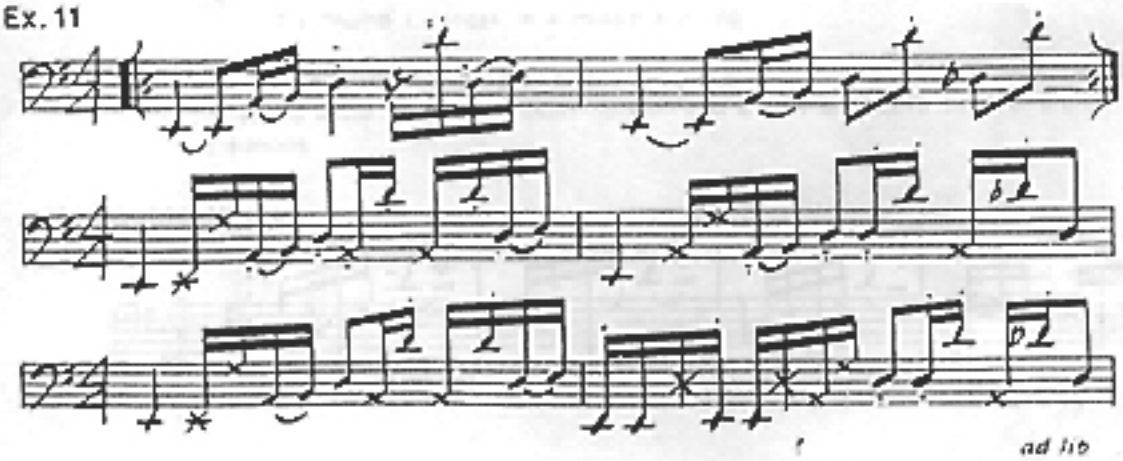
Ex. 10



The basic theme in example 10 is demonstrated next as a half-time shuffle. Again notice how the change in rhythmic feel and phrasing creates an entirely new sound. This example also demonstrates the idea of using space in your playing in order to let the music breathe. Be sensitive to what the other musicians in the band are playing and try to develop tasteful bass parts to compliment the sound. Remember that your primary objective is to be a musician who plays bass, not just a bass player with a lot of hot licks.

Example 11 uses the blues scale in the key of E

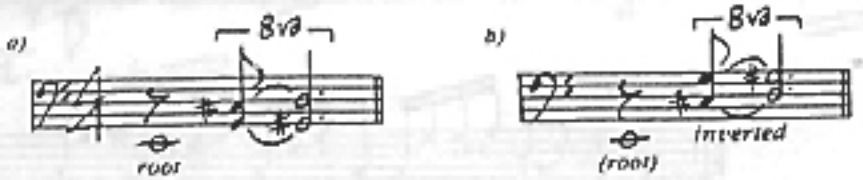
Ex. 11



DOUBLE STOPS

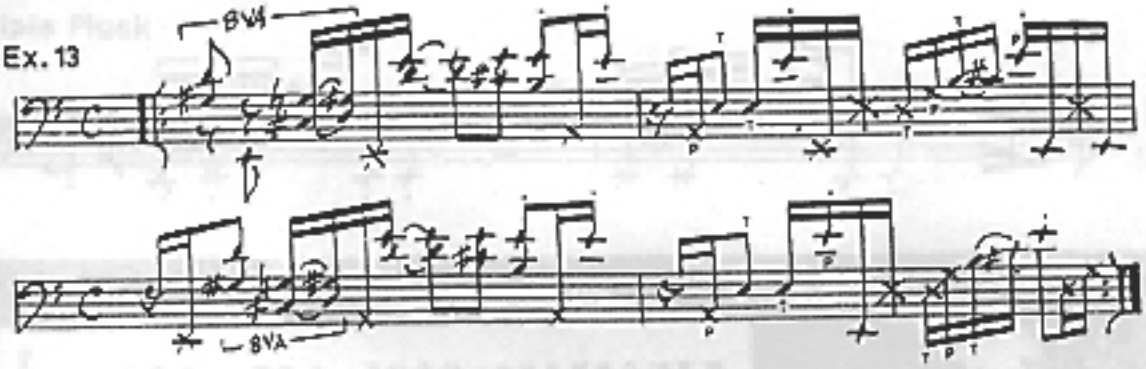
A double-stop is defined simply as two notes that are played together to create harmony. There are many different combinations of notes that can be used to harmonize a line, however certain intervals are used extensively in funk:

Ex. 12



These intervals are incorporated in the next example:

Ex. 13



SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

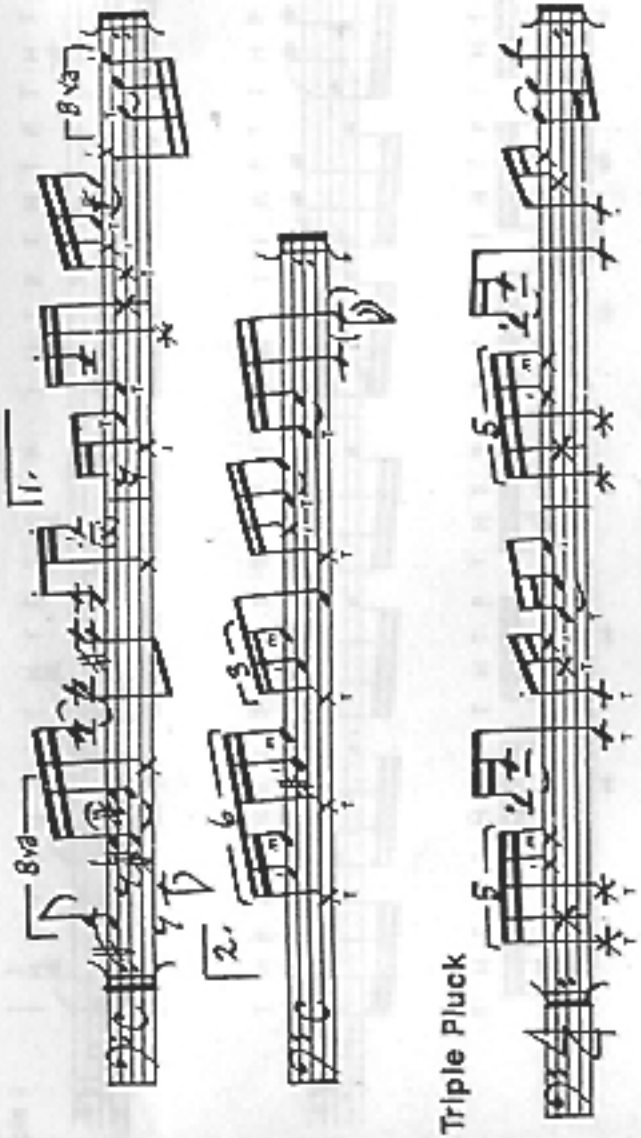
The tape concludes with a collection of advanced techniques that should open the door to many new possibilities. The right hand symbols for the double and triple pluck examples are as follows:

T = Thumb i = index m = middle a = ring

The flamenco strum and right hand tapping examples have not been transcribed since they would require some rather unorthodox notation and still be subject to many different interpretations.

Double Pluck

The following example is a variation on Ex. 13. The double-pluck technique is incorporated in bar 4.



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Program Length: 83 minutes

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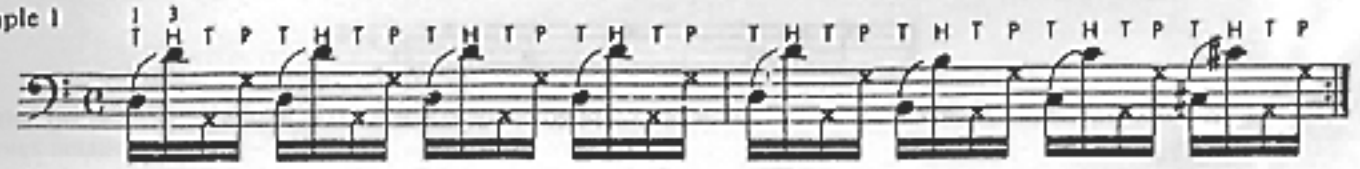
Hammered-On Octave Patterns with Dead Notes

The following octave patterns combine cross-string hammering with dead notes. You will find they have a very different feel than the octave patterns with only the cross-string hammering included.

Example 1



Example 4

Introduction to Slap-Bass Studies

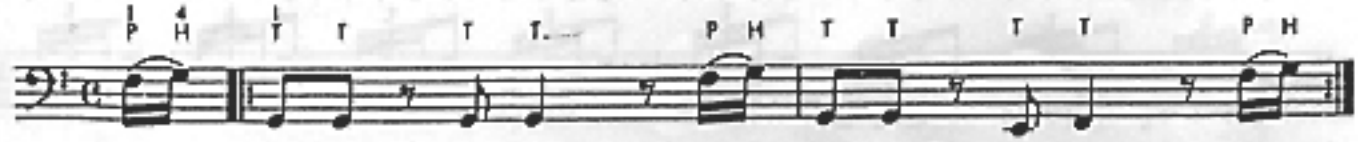
From this point on you will find dozens of short patterns (licks) which will help further develop your feel for slap-bass playing. The exercises continue in progressive order so that as you move through them your technique should improve. Be sure you have mastered each one before moving on. This takes a lot of practice and patience.

Have fun with these licks. Once you are able to play them as written, change them around to fit your own style of playing. Try them in different keys.

I also suggest that you start a notebook of bass lines. As you learn this material, try to come up with your own bass lines. If you make up a line that you like, write it down. Over a period of time you can collect lots of good ideas which you otherwise might have forgotten. In addition, writing out your own lines will improve your sight-reading ability.

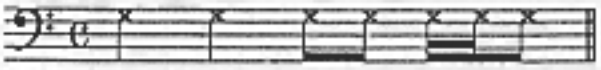
I hope you will enjoy the lines I have included in the book. They are a selection of the best bass lines from my personal music notebook.

Whatever you do DON'T STOP PRACTICING!

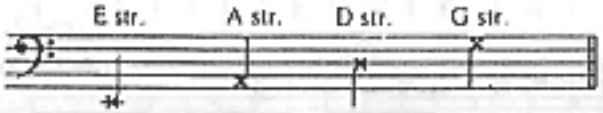


Dead Notes

Dead notes, as they are related to slap-bass playing, can be defined as notes which add to the rhythmic content of the music but have no distinguishable pitch. They are created by striking a string with the fingers of either hand while holding the string mute. This creates a percussive sound (click) which is very much a part of the slap-bass sound. Since these notes have no pitch they are notated differently than regular notes. In this book you will find dead notes notated in the following manner:



Notice that the normal round head of the note is replaced by an x. In addition, throughout this book you will see only four different dead notes notated:



Notice that each of the dead notes corresponds with a string on the bass. This is to indicate on which string a dead note is played (i.e., if a dead note is written on the note E, one leger line below the staff, it indicates that the dead note is played on the E string).

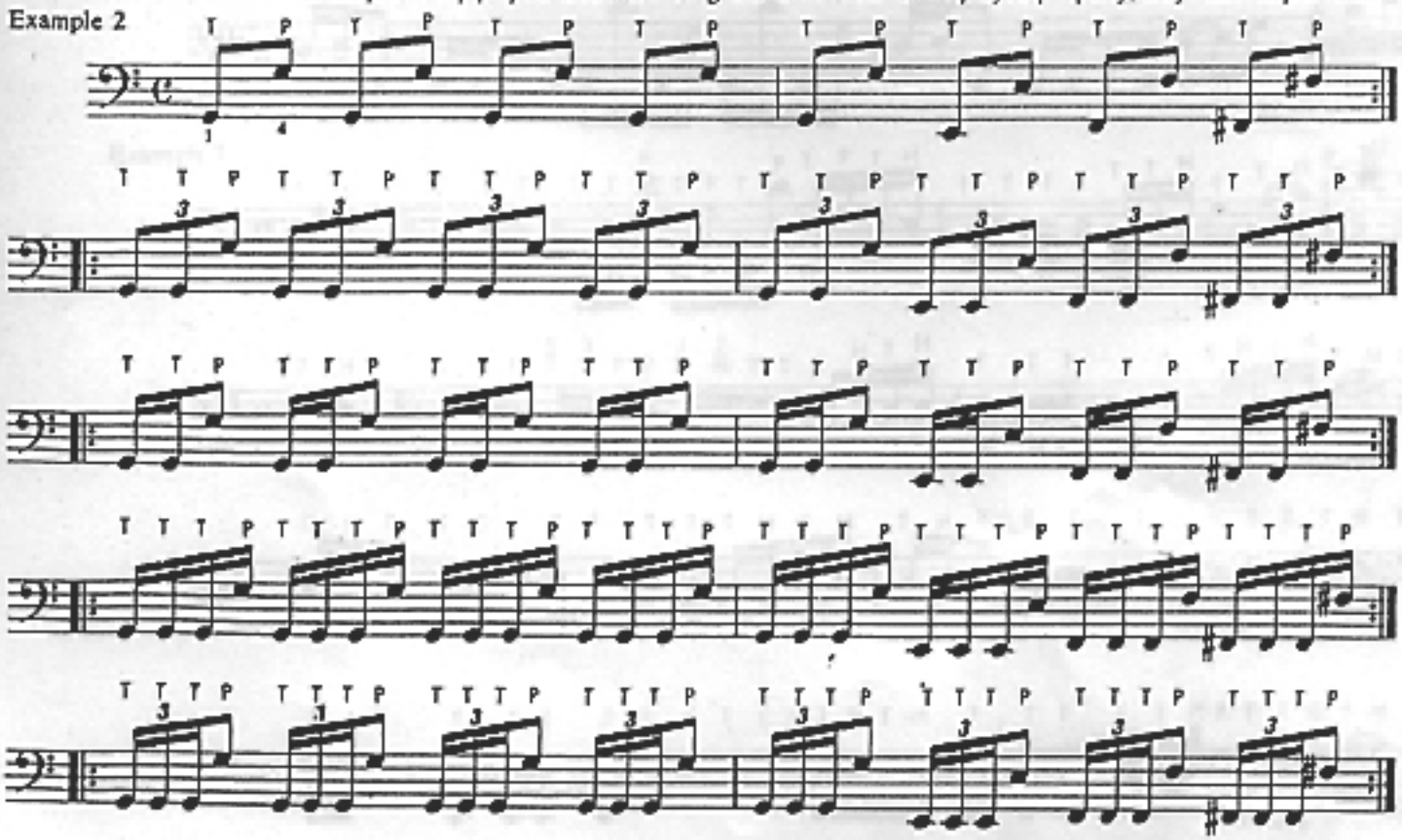
Example 1

Octave Exercises

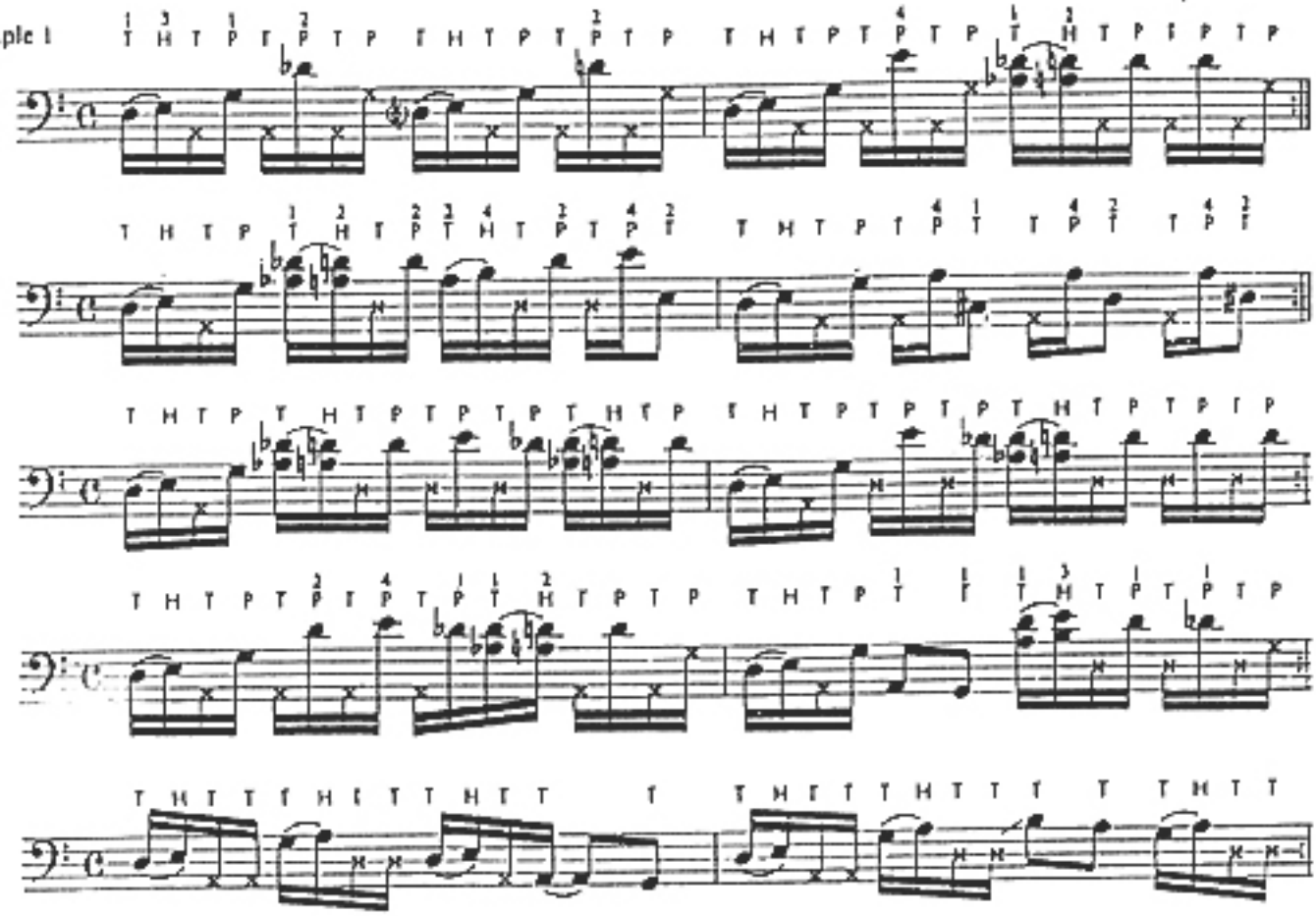
One of the most commonly used figures in slap-bass playing is the octave pattern. This is because octave patterns combine basic harmonic movement with a strong rhythmic foundation. In other words, they help keep everyone "in-the-pocket."

Since octave lines are so simple, many players take them for granted. In order to be played properly, they must be practiced!

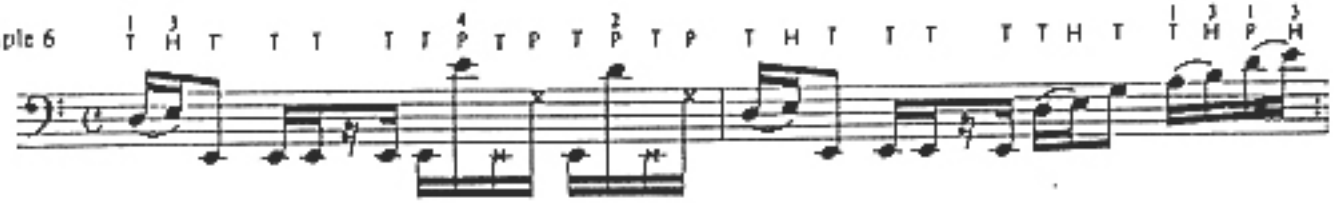
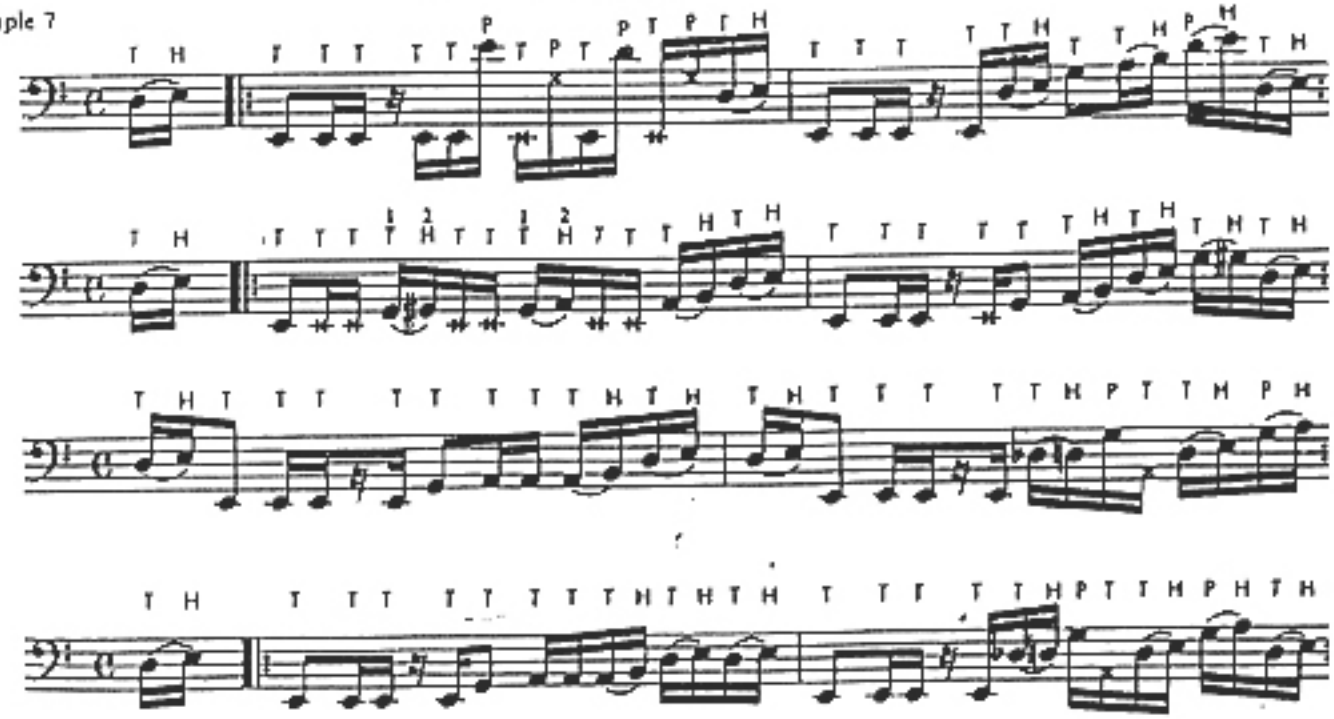
Example 2



Example 1



Example 6



Example 7